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The human as an essential biological resource?!

Focusing on the OECD's concept of Biological Resource Centres (BRCs), this paper tracks the making of resources in the context of biotechnology and the life sciences in the context of the Biobanking and BioMolecular resources Research Infrastructure (BBMRI-ERIC). The main focus lies on biological resources of human origin, which the OECD defined as "essential raw material" for "the benefit of all humankind". This conceptualization of biological resources as a common public good sets up an intriguing theoretical situation. Thus, whereas biodiversity has been a conventional discourse for wild biological resources, firmly embedded as common heritage in the public domain, it is different for biological resources of human origin and certainly more complex due to the (often) competing discourses of venture capital, scientific progress or data protection. Moreover, it has been pointed out that the re-characterization of biological material as a public resource not only allows a re-humanization of the person but also calls for a particular form of political responsibility.

Consequently, the general aim is to show how resources are made and which forms they take in the context of biotechnology and the life sciences, to which concepts (such as preservation or conservation, commercialisation or common global good) or discourses about human biological resources (such as genes, tissues and cells) are they are linked to.

(215 words)